



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of California*

*McGregor W. Scott
United States Attorney*

*501 I Street, Suite 10-100
Sacramento, California 95814*

*916/554-2700
Fax 916/554-2900*

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*Contact: Mary Wenger, 916-554-2730
Available at: www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae/home*

Crack Cocaine Dealer Sentenced to 27 Years in Federal Prison

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that FRANCISCO MEDINA CASTANEDA (nickname "Poncho"), 27, of Stockton, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Edward J. Garcia to 27 years in federal prison followed by a 10-year term of supervised release. The defendant was found guilty on February 23, 2005, by a federal jury of conspiracy to distribute cocaine base and distribution of cocaine base.

This case is the product of an extensive/joint investigation by the San Joaquin County's METRO narcotics task force and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Richard Bender and Jason Hitt.

During the sentencing hearing, Judge Garcia noted that the defendant had a prior state conviction for possession for sale of cocaine base, a prior federal conviction for felon in possession of a firearm, and that he had been a member of a Stockton street gang. During the trial of the present case, evidence was presented which proved that CASTANEDA conspired with ROLANDO MEDINA (22) and MARCOS GARCIA (21) to distribute cocaine base. Both MEDINA and GARCIA pled guilty to the charges. MEDINA, who had no prior convictions, was sentenced on May 7, 2005, to 12 years and seven months in prison. GARCIA has yet to be sentenced.

According to AUSA Bender, who had also prosecuted CASTANEDA on his previous

felon in possession charge, CASTANEDA had been released from federal prison for less than four months on the felon in possession of firearm charge, before he again began dealing drugs in this case. According to the evidence at the February trial, he obtained kilogram quantities of powder cocaine and converted the powder to cocaine base (commonly called "crack") before selling it in Stockton. When the agents executed a search warrant on the defendants' East Street residence on December 9, 2003, they found the defendant in the process of converting (or "cooking") powder cocaine into cocaine base. In addition to seizing cocaine base, the agents also seized distribution quantities of crystal methamphetamine and two handguns.

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